



# Rivers Provincial Park

## Management Plan



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This management plan for Rivers Provincial Park was prepared under the authority of The Provincial Parks Act.

Manitoba Sustainable Development  
Parks and Protected Spaces Branch  
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## 1. Introduction

The Provincial Parks Act (1993) requires that a management plan be prepared for each provincial park. Management plans establish long-term direction for parks and address issues pertaining to resource use, development of park land, environmental protection, and the preservation of culturally significant areas. They are used in conjunction with park regulations, procedures and other departmental and government policies and legislation.

This management plan is based on the role of Rivers Provincial Park in Manitoba's system of parks and the participation of those who use and care about the park.

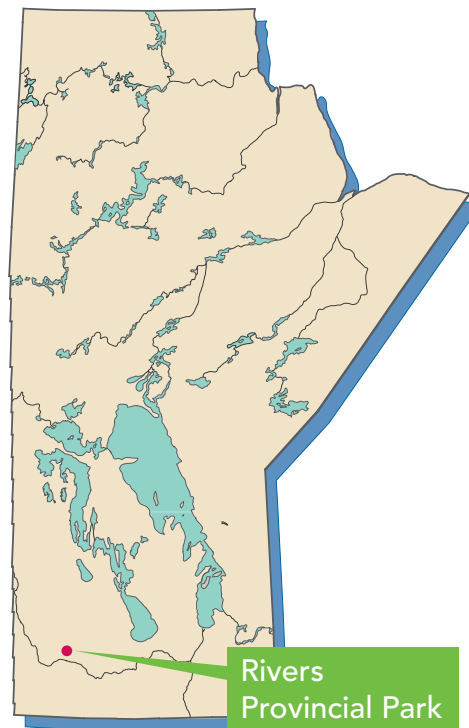
The process of preparing the management plan and coordinating the public involvement process was the responsibility of a team involving staff from Parks and Protected Spaces Branch, and regional staff of Manitoba Sustainable Development. Preparation of the management plan involved a number of steps. The first step was to review the current operation of the park, its attributes, and its history of use. Information collected through that process was used to prepare a draft management plan.

The public was then invited to comment on the draft plan. Involving park users and those with an interest in the park was an important part of preparing the management plan. Public input was collected through the Manitoba Parks website and correspondence with departmental staff. The public consultation process was completed in March 2017. The information received during this process was used to revise and finalize the management plan.

This management plan will guide the management of Rivers Provincial Park over the next 10 to 15 years. Where an update or new direction on any matters described in this management plan may be needed, a process for publicly reviewing and updating the plan should be undertaken.

The rights of Indigenous Peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within Rivers Provincial Park are

acknowledged and respected within the context of this draft management plan.



## 2. Park History

Rivers Provincial Park was established in 1961. Originally, the park was 38 hectares (ha) in size. In 2004, the park boundary was amended to include an additional 49 ha of protected mixed-grass prairie.

## 3. Park Attributes

Rivers Provincial Park is approximately 87 ha in size, and is situated on the west shore of Lake Wahtopanah. Lake Wahtopanah is a reservoir located on the Little Saskatchewan River that was created by the construction of a dam in 1960. The park is located 4 kilometers (km) east of the community of Rivers, and 44 km northwest of Brandon. It is accessed from Provincial Road 664 (8<sup>th</sup> Avenue) north of Provincial Trunk Highway 25.



### 3.1 Natural

Rivers Provincial Park is located within the Aspen Parkland Ecoregion. Natural vegetation throughout the area includes trembling aspen, willow, a variety of mixed grass species such as spear grass and little bluestem, and shrubs such as silverberry, snowberry, and prairie rose. The prairie grassland supports a variety of wildlife. Treed areas are located adjacent to the waterfront and campground areas and along the northern edge of the prairie.

Construction of the Lake Wahtopanah reservoir and development of recreational facilities have resulted in moderate disturbance to the park's natural landscape. The reservoir is 9.7 km in length, and 610 metres across at its widest point. Fish species that are commonly caught in the reservoir include northern pike, perch, rock bass and walleye.



### 3.2 Recreation and Interpretation

The campground in the park contains basic, electrical, and full service nightly campsites; basic and electrical seasonal campsites; and a group use camping area. Amenities in the campground include showers and modern and non-modern washrooms. Park facilities also include a beach, playground, concession stand, miniature golf course, and picnic areas. A boat launch, dock, and boat landing area provide opportunities for fishing, as well as other water-based recreation activities on Lake Wahtopanah.

The downstream area adjacent to the park is known as a launching point to begin canoe trips down the

Little Saskatchewan River to where it meets with the Assiniboine River west of Brandon. This 38 km route contains some rapids, and passes the site of Manitoba's first hydroelectric generating station.

Trail systems within the park provide hiking opportunities for park visitors. The Prairie Grass Trail, approximately 3 km in length, provides an opportunity to view and learn about the mixed grass prairie. The Aspen Trail leads from the beach area, within the park, to the community of Rivers.

### 3.3 Cultural

Indigenous Peoples occupied the area surrounding what is now Rivers Provincial Park for thousands of years. They utilized many of the prairie plants in the area, such as sweet grass, purple coneflower, and prairie sage, for spiritual and medicinal purposes.

### 3.4 Additional Features

The concession stand and miniature golf course within the park are operated under a lease agreement between Manitoba Sustainable Development and private operators.

## 4. Park Management Framework

### 4.1 Classification

Manitoba's provincial park system is made up of almost 100 different parks and park reserves. The role of each park within this system is identified by its classification. Parks may be classified as one of five types: wilderness, natural, recreation, heritage or indigenous traditional use.

Rivers Provincial Park was originally classified as a recreation park. The purpose of a recreation park, as defined in The Provincial Parks Act, is to provide recreational opportunities. However, when the protected mixed-grass prairie area was added to the park in 2004, the purpose of the park expanded to include the need to preserve this aspect of the Aspen

Parkland Ecoregion. As this purpose is more aligned with the definition of a natural park, in 2017 Manitoba Sustainable Development undertook a process, which included public consultation, to change the classification of Rivers Provincial Park from a recreation park to a natural park. The purpose of a natural park is both to preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses.

## 4.2 Park Purpose

The objectives of Manitoba's provincial park system are to conserve ecosystems and maintain biodiversity; to preserve unique and representative natural, cultural and heritage resources; and to provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities in a natural setting. The purpose of each park within the system is to contribute to these overarching objectives while fully recognizing and incorporating local considerations.

The purpose of Rivers Provincial Park is to preserve physical features and biological communities representative of the Aspen Parkland Ecoregion and accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities. In doing so, the park will:

- provide camping, fishing, picnicking, and beach opportunities
- serve as an important regional park for residents of southwestern Manitoba and visitors to the area
- provide boat access to Lake Wahtopanah
- maintain and enhance a remnant of mixed-grass prairie

## 4.3 Land Use Categories

Land use categories (LUCs) are used to designate lands within provincial parks for various purposes. There are eight LUCs in which land may be categorized: wilderness, backcountry, resource management, recreational development, heritage, access, winter road access or indigenous heritage.

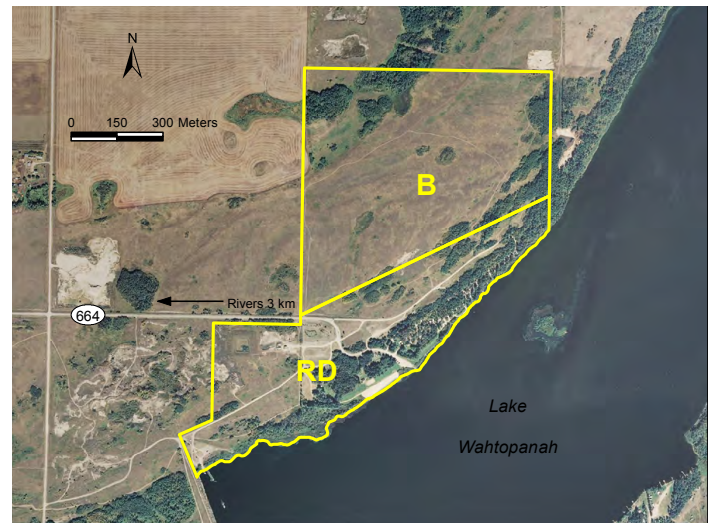
Within Rivers Provincial Park, 56 per cent of the land has a backcountry (B) LUC. The main purpose of this

categorization is to protect examples of natural landscapes and provide basic facilities and trails for nature-oriented recreation in a largely undisturbed environment. Within Rivers Provincial Park this includes:

- Protecting remnant native mixed-grass prairie
- Providing nature-oriented recreational trails for hiking

The remaining 44 per cent of the park has a recreational development (RD) LUC. The main purpose of this categorization is to accommodate recreational development. Within Rivers Provincial Park this includes:

- a modern campground with picnic and day use facilities
- a beach, playground, boat launch and concession



Map 1: Rivers Provincial Park

# 5. Park Management Guidelines

## 5.1 Natural Values

Rivers Provincial Park has a natural looking setting which is an important aspect of the park experience. A substantial area of mixed grass prairie can be found within the park.

## Guideline

1. The park will be maintained as a natural-looking area that is characteristic of the surrounding landscape.
2. The mixed grass prairie area will remain protected and free from development. The site will be monitored and managed to maintain the extent of the prairie and to prevent encroachment from surrounding woody vegetation.
3. When species of conservation concern are identified in the park, any negative impacts on those species associated with park use will be minimized or avoided.
4. Parks and Protected Spaces Branch will participate in departmental efforts to prevent aquatic and terrestrial invasive species from spreading within the park. This may include but not be limited to the promotion of proper decontamination procedures for watercraft and water-related equipment, and educating park visitors on how they can stop the spread of invasive species.

## 5.2 Recreation and Interpretation

Rivers Provincial Park campground offers a modern level of camping service. The campground is directly adjacent to Lake Wahtopanah and can experience occasional flooding.

### Guidelines

1. Camping will continue to be offered at a range of service levels.
2. Water levels at the park shoreline will be monitored and public access may be restricted during high water events.
3. The Prairie Grass Trail and associated signage will be maintained. Opportunities to provide self-guided interpretation will be explored in order to provide park visitors with a learning experience focused on this unique natural area.



## 5.3 Commercial Operations

Commercial activity within a park has the ability to enhance or detract from the park experience and must be managed to best suit the park environment and user needs. Lands within the recreational development LUC in Rivers Provincial Park are highly developed.

### Guideline

1. Manitoba Sustainable Development will continue to provide an opportunity for a commercial facility in the park. Expansion of commercial operations will be considered only if the proposed service is directly associated with camping-related recreation and is suitable to the park setting and purpose.

## Bibliography

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